

February 16, 2017

Appropriations Committee Public Hearing Testimony

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Good Evening Chairpersons and Members of the Appropriations Committee. I am submitting this testimony in opposition to THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS. In his proposal, the Governor seeks to reduce funding for the Services for Persons with Disabilities line item, which includes the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut, by 20%.

According to a 2012 study conducted by Daniel H. Daneshvar, it is reported that each year approximately 1.7 million individuals have been diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury. Out of these brain injuries, 1.4 million are documented for emergency room visits and nearly 300,000 are hospitalizations annually. However, these numbers may not appropriately account for the total occurrences of concussion incidents that individuals suffer annually. Outside the suffering of the damage itself, these painful brain injuries have substantial direct and indirect financial consequences, projected at over \$60 billion yearly in the United States single-handedly.

Recovery is a functional reclamation. Two brain injuries that are similar may have different consequences despite their similarities. Psychological symptoms from a brain injury can include irritability, headaches, memory problems, aggression, anxiety, attention deficits, depression, and difficulty regulating your mood. These victims of brain injuries can have a loss of major cognitive abilities and suffer through many emotional problems. The symptoms of a head injury may take some time to resolve, causing a significant lasting affliction.

In our society, we need to understand how important it is to take care of those in need. But if the funding systems that support them continue to be cut, we cannot provide these individuals with the help they desperately need. Head injuries, including mild trauma brain injuries, can have dramatic consequences on the individual's job, community, social, and family interactions. Unfortunately, some people do not realize how important the issue of head injury is until it hits close to home.

It is important to remember that some of these people with brain injuries have children and having this injury can have an impact on parenting which in turn can affect their children. According to a report written by Drs. Kacey Little Maestas and Angelle M. Sander, who specialize in parenting for adults with traumatic brain injuries, many parents who have been affected can create barriers in parenting their children. Some challenges that parents of traumatic brain injuries face are financial complications, being unable to drive, and relationship changes between the parent and child. Normal day-to-day parenting activities can be very difficult for these parents to engage in due to increased fatigue. The children notice that their parents are no longer able to assist them in their homework assignments, make family recipe meals, play sports and participate in recreational activities with them. However, some parents might also suffer with severe mental problems due to their traumatic brain injury. Depression and anxiety can make it very difficult for parents to feel a sense of happiness. Parents with traumatic head injuries sometimes slowly isolate themselves by not engaging in family activities or planning events as they once did before their traumatic brain injury. Often, these

individuals and their family members do not know where to turn. Reasons for this could include lack of services being available or a lack of knowledge of the services that are available. Therefore, it is extremely important that programs or agencies that provide support to people with brain injuries do not have their funding cut.

In order to put this into perspective, imagine that you are a parent and your son name is Tommy. Tommy accidentally fell and hit his head. He then comes home to you crying saying that his head hurts as you watch him hold his hands on his head. You visit a doctor who say Tommy's CT scans are negative for visible signs of damage but Tommy is still complaining about his headaches. As his parent, you start to notice that Tommy is not able to do the things he used to do. Imagine how scary and frustrating this could be for a parent who does not know where to turn or cannot find the services and support to help your son, Tommy. That is a feeling that no parent should ever have to experience in this country. These are the type of services and support systems that agencies like the brain injury alliance of Connecticut provides to parents with children like Tommy. When there are people in need of help, it becomes all our problem because we should continue to understand we are responsible for each other. There are so many brain injuries daily that can affect an individual and their families lives.

No one else does what BIAC does, including the Department of Social Services (DSS), which is why DSS contracts with BIAC to provide the many essential services that it is not equipped to offer. BIAC meets the needs of the State's brain injury survivors on behalf of DSS as efficiently as it does effectively. A 20% reduction in funding would severely impact BIAC and the services they provide to the community. Please maintain funding for the Services for Persons with Disabilities line so that BIAC can be there for those who need them most.